NARRATOR

Madras 1995

Co pilot, in his mid twenties, dressed in airline's uniform, adjusts his headset and addresses the passengers through the intercom.

ADI

Hello, ladies and gentlemen. This is your First Officer, Adithya, speaking. I'd like to thank you for choosing our airline. We are currently preparing for our landing. The local time in Madras is approximately 7 PM.

NARRATOR

The landing gear engages, and the cockpit gently touches down on the runway as the announcement concludes.

Adithya upon completing post-landing procedures, heads to the exit, hails a taxi to the hotel, reserved by the airlines for the crew.
As the taxi moves, the driver tunes into an FM.

RJ
Good evening, Madras! You're now tuned in to the night show on Radio City. And oh, the music! by A.R. Rahman from the movie Bombay, is a definitely a rhythmic Poem, fusion of indian folk, carnatic sound with a western touch. And here we go…

Song plays,

NARRATOR
as the taxi navigates through cityscape with colonial style buildings of madras…

The vintage taxi rolls to a stop in front of the elegant Grande Hotel as the music ends. A uniformed bell boy opens the car door as Adi steps out, paying the fare. with his bag, walks into the lobby, adorned with crystal chandeliers and antique furnitures.
The bell boy escorts Adi towards the reception desk, and he hands over the letter with the airline seal from the airline to the receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST
Your room is on the floor below the rooftop sir. Enjoy your stay.

NARRATOR
As he enters the vintage elevator, its golden grille doors closes. The buttons light up as the elevator ascends smoothly and he walks through the corridor adorned with classic art, reaching his suite room.

The suite includes a cozy sitting area with armchairs and a mahogany coffee table. Soft lighting creating an intimate atmosphere.

A vintage-style work desk with a rotary telephone sits by the window. The suite bathroom features porcelain fixtures with gold accents. The clawfoot bathtub surrounded by vintage tiles.

And a balcony overlooking the city.

After a refreshing bath, he approaches the business centre desk on the ground floor, to print some documentation for his visa procedures for international layovers.

The dot matrix printer starts to print, upon losing the patience on the slow process, he steps into the central courtyard.

The hotel had front desk, back office, kitchen and service core on one side and café, restaurant, open dining and sangeeth hall { a banquet } on the adjacent side linked by the central courtyard.

With a curiosity, he move towards the intricately carved door of the sangeeth hall.

There was a classical dance performance going on. With every seats filled, dimly lit yellow lights giving a classic look.

It was a dual performance. Two women, disguised as Sita and Ram. The dance depicts Sita urging Ram to take her along to the vanavasam.

Ram was blurred from Adi’s eyes, the eyes was only on Sita.

Her eyes, her bindi, her oscillating earings, her nose pin, her facial expression and her graceful moves made him freeze.

The performance came to its end, as dancers left the stage , the hall was filled with applause.

Aadhi, intrigued by her performance and elegance, makes his way to backstage following her shouting “ Oii, Sita”

She couldn’t hear, and went inside the dressing room.

The room was half-opened with a mirror reflecting her face, as she removing her attire.

Feeling the presence behind her, she turns back from her chair, with a smile

AARUDRA
Yes, what do you want?

ADI
I was again frozen by hearing her voice.

At times, unexpected moments turn into best memories, as I was passing by I got captivated by your performance Ms. Sita!

AARUDRA
Haan, not Sita, call me Aarudra

ADI
She smiled and extended her hands

AARUDRA
Thankyou, Mr ...?

ADI
Adi... Adithya

NARRATOR
next noon, Consular office, Ethiraj road

The sound of whispered conversations, ringing phones, and the occasional announcements echo through the space.

Realizing the time constraints and the crowded environment, Adi decides to postpone his visa verification for a more suitable time in the next three days, considering his flying schedule and exits the office.

As he comes out, his gaze moves to an open air Natya mandir adjacent to the consular building. A dancer, on flow with her move seamlessly turns on the direction towards Adi, and it is once again Aarudra.

ADI
She concluded her dance and came towards me and she asked

AARUDRA
Again captivated by my performance ?

ADI
Yeah

And she smiled

AARUDRA
Fine, what bought you this side Mr?

ADI
Ahh, I'm an airline pilot and I am here for my visa verification, for layover. But, it's crowded and my departure is within few hours, so I couldn't make it today and I have to revisit after 3 days.

AARUDRA
Wow, a pilot?

ADI
Yes

AARUDRA
Yeah, I do understand your time constraints, let's catch up when you come back for your verification.

ADI
And we exchanged landline number.

NARRATOR
2 days later, as Aarudra practices her dance. The telephone on a nearby table starts to ring. She picks it up.

AARUDRA (answering the call)
Hello?

ADI (with a smile in his voice)
Oii, Sita, Adi here.

AARUDRA
Adi! So, free enough to call me in the midst of your airborne adventures.

ADI
Well, you know, even amidst my erratic schedule, I find a moment to call you. I had a late-night departure, and you know, when I saw through the cockpit, the moon reminded me of you.

AARUDRA
What about the stars ...?

ADI
Hmm.. stars in the sky wants to reside in your ankle it seems

AARUDRA
Oh!... Well, that's a poetic comparison.

NARRATOR
Aarudra, on the other end of the line, laughs softly.

Conversation continues....

ADI
Ok see you the day after! Bye

AARUDRA
Bye

(the day after)

NARRATOR
Adi exits the Consular Office. Aarudra, waiting outside.

AARUDRA
Finally done with the visa formalities!.

ADI
yeah.

NARRATOR
they hop into an auto rickshaw, weaving through the vibrant streets of Madras. As Adi tries to converse Aarudra's attention were on the wall posters of Bombay.

the auto rickshaw ride concludes at marina

Aarudra, begins to share her story.

AARUDRA
I 've been practicing classical dance for six years.

ADI
Six years!

NARRATOR
And she continues…. The sun starts to set, casting a warm glow over the beach.

ADI
Are you free on this weekend ? How about catching a movie, "Bombay"?
with a thoughtful smile, she replied yeah

(the next day)

NARRATOR
Aarudra stands by the gate. In the distance, the hum of a Ford Escort pulls up, with Aadhi riding it.

AARUDRA
Where did this car come from?

ADI
Rented it.

AARUDRA
We could have taken a taxi or a rickshaw. Why the car?

ADI
coz, it's a drive in theatre.

AARUDRA
Oh, drive-in ..

NARRATOR
The Ford wheels parked at Marina Drive-In. there were rows of cars, open-air setting with the night sky as a natural backdrop. with eyes on the screen , the movie began, a Madras talkies production, a film by Maniratnam…

ADI
a romantic scene unfolds, i turned towards Aarudra and said You know, this could have been us.

she remained in silence.

the rest of the movie and the drive back was accompanied with uneasy silence.

as the car stopped at her gate she opened the car door, stepped out, and walked towards the gate without a word. suddenly she turned back towards me

AARUDRA
It's my Ranga Pravesha, next Sunday. Be present and let's see

ADI
and she left

on return to the crew base, junior crew member handed a courier, it was approval of visa for my layover.

telephone rings from Captain,

CAPTAIN
Adi, your first international trip is on Sunday. Be prepared.

NARRATOR
The mix of happiness and conflict dances within as Aarudra's inauguration and Adi's flyover were on the same day. Unable to connect with Aarudra, Adi writes a letter.

INAUGURATION DAY

NARRATOR
Aarudra, adorned in traditional attire, practicing her adavus and hastas. Her friend walks in and hands over the letter.

This is arrived for you. From Adi.

As she takes the letter, a mix of emotions crossing her face as she reads.

ADI
Dear Aarudra,

I hope this letter finds you well. I received the news of my first international trip on Sunday. It's an opportunity I have been eagerly waiting for, but it comes at a time when I had planned to be with you for your inauguration. I'm truly sorry that circumstances are pulling me away at this moment.

Wishing you the best

AARUDRA (whispering to herself)
Without him, the dance feels incomplete, i can't hide my sadness and fake my expressions.

NARRATOR
Aarudra, in her dance attire, leaves the dance hall and heads to the airport

On the other side,

Adithya, dressed in his airline uniform with a half-hearted, walks slowly towards the boarding area.

ADI (whispering to himself)
with her memory, i can't take off.

NARRATOR
Adi arrives at the concert hall, searching for Aarudra. but to his surprise, she wasn't in the concert hall.

NARRATOR
Aarudra, standing near the airport entrance, the rush of departing and arriving passengers creating a chaotic backdrop. Her eyes scans the crowd, searching for Adi.

With a sense of dejection, she heads to Marina Beach, revisiting the memories tethered to the place they once shared.

She sits on the shore, Her eyes filled with tears, watching over the waves.

NARRATOR
Meanwhile, nearby a group of kids building sand castles.

Adi arrives there

ADI (smiling, to the children)
Can you go over there and say it to her?

NARRATOR
The children, excited, run towards Aarudra.

CHILDREN (to Aarudra on her ears)
Oii, Sita!

AARUDRA { surprised, smiling }
What?

CHILD (pointing to Adi)
He said to call you that.

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